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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a decade of research by top experts on children up to the age of ten, this book challenges the belief that early risk factors and problems severely constrain a child's life chances. The book explores the range of effective parenting techniques and social supports, programs, and policies to make the case that young children's education and welfare of our youngest children should be a national priority. Following an introduction noting progress made toward the Carnegie Foundation's "Starting Points" goals, Chapter 1 examines what families need, including how parents matter, and their roles as child's first teacher, guide, protector, provider, and "shield." Chapter 2 examines the needs of infants and toddlers, including health care, mental health, and quality care. This chapter also looks at widening the policy lens and the Early Head Start initiative. Chapter 3 highlights preschool and school readiness initiatives and the need for investing in the early childhood workforce. Chapter 4 examines the need for cooperation to achieve comprehensive integrated initiatives, the force of geographic location on child outcomes, and steps to harness energies of communities on behalf of children, such as focusing on systems rather than just programs, and empowering families rather than just serving them. Chapter 5, an agenda for change, looks at lessons from a decade of progress, and offers recommendations for giving children a fair shot at success, enhancing basic family resources, providing good health and protection to children, focusing on rich early learning experiences, and supporting caring community efforts. (Contains extensive reference notes organized by chapter.) (HTH)

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